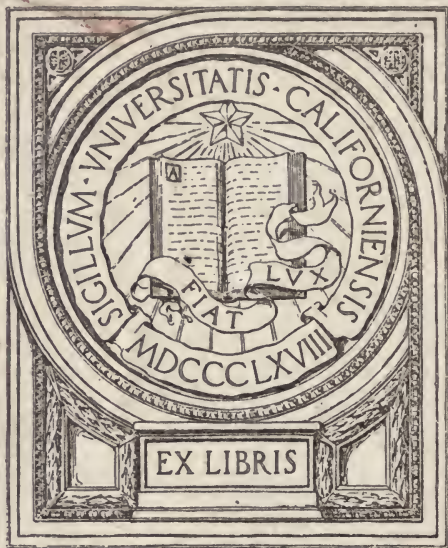




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Commandery

Of the State

—OF—

CALIFORNIA

MILITARY ORDER

OF THE

Loyal Legion

OF THE

UNITED STATES.



# “SHILOH”

—AS—

SEEN BY A PRIVATE SOLDIER.

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A PAPER READ BEFORE

CALIFORNIA COMMANDERY

OF THE

MILITARY ORDER

OF THE

Loyal Legion of the United States,

MAY 31, 1889.

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BY COMPANION

WARREN OLNEY,

LATE CAPTAIN 65TH U. S. C. Inf.

(Insignia No. 4862.)





# THE BATTLE OF SHILOH.

## With Some Personal Reminiscences.

Very interesting descriptions of the great battles of the late war, written by prominent generals, have been lately published and widely read. It seems to me, however, that it is time for the private soldier to be heard from.

Of course, his field of vision is much more limited than that of his general. On the other hand, it is of vital importance to the latter to gloss over his mistakes, and draw attention only to those things which will add to his reputation. The private soldier has no such feeling. It is only to the officers of high rank engaged that a battle can bring glory and renown. To the army of common soldiers, who do the actual fighting, and risk mutilation and death, there is no reward except the consciousness of duty bravely performed. This was peculiarly the case in the late war, when more than a million of young men, the flower of our country, left their workshops and farms, their schools and colleges, to endure the hardships of the march and the camp, to risk health, limb and life, that their country might live, expecting nothing, hoping nothing for themselves, but all for their fatherland.

The first really great battle of the war was that of Pittsburg Landing, or Shiloh, and I shall not only attempt to give a general account of the battle, but also describe it from the point of view of a man in the ranks.

In respect to the general features of this desperate struggle between our own countrymen, my statements are derived from many reports and accounts carefully collated, and from many conversations with soldiers engaged, both from the Union and Confederate armies.

Who of us, having reached middle life, does not recall the exultation and enthusiasm aroused by the news of the capture of Fort Donelson? What a thrill of pride and patriotism was felt through all the loyal North! The soldiers of the great Northwest had attacked a citadel of the rebellion, and captured it, with sixteen thousand of its defenders.

At this time the Third Iowa Infantry was strung along the North Missouri Railroad, guarding bridges and doing other police work. Company B, which had the honor of having on its muster roll private Olney, was stationed at that time in the little town of Sturgeon, Missouri, where our principal occupation was to keep from freezing. We had then spent eight months campaigning in that border State—that is, if you call guarding railways and bridges, and attempting to overawe the disaffected, enlivened now and then by a brisk skirmish, campaigning. The Second Iowa had led the charge which captured the hostile breastworks at Donelson, and General Grant had telegraphed to General Halleck at St. Louis, who had repeated the message to the Governor of our State, that the Second Iowa was the bravest of the brave. The First Iowa had distinguished itself at Wilson's Creek, near Springfield, under General Lyon, while *we*—well, we hadn't done much of anything but to get a licking at Blue Mills. Therefore, when a message to move came, and we found ourselves on the way to join General Grant's army, we felt quite hilarious.

At St. Louis we were put on board the steamer "Iatan." Down the Mississippi, up the Ohio, up the Tennessee. As we proceeded up the Tennessee we were continually overtaking or being joined by other steamboats loaded with troops, until presently the river was alive with transports, carrying the army of the West right into the heart of the Confederacy. It was a beautiful and stirring sight; mild weather had set in (it was now the second week of March), the flotilla of steamboats, black with soldiers, bands playing, flags flying, all combined to arouse and interest. It was the "pomp and circumstance of glorious war."

Frequent stoppages were made, giving us a chance to run ashore. About the thirteenth we reached the landing-place, which soon afterwards became famous. The river was very high, and at first there seemed to be doubts as to where a landing should be effected, but in a few days the question was settled. Our boat was moored as near the shore as possible, and we joined the immense throng painfully making their way through the unfathomable mud to camps in the dense woods. The first things I observed after reaching the high bluff, were trees that had been torn and shattered by shells from our gun-

boats, which, it seems, had dislodged a company of Confederates, who had dug rifle-pits on the bluff, from whence they had fired on our steamboats.

We first camped on the bluff near the landing, but shortly moved back about a mile from the river, and camped on the edge of a small cotton field with dense forests all around. The Hamburg road ran past the left of our line, between us and the Forty-first Illinois; while on the right was a small ravine, which ran into a little creek, and that into Snake Creek.

The mud—well, it was indescribable. Though we were only a mile from our base of supplies, the greatest difficulty was experienced in getting camp equipage and provisions. We found that other divisions of the army had landed before us, moving farther out to the front towards Corinth, and had so cut up the roads that they were quagmires their whole length. Teams were stalled in the mud in every direction. The principal features of the landscape were trees, mud, wagons buried to the hub, and struggling, plunging mule teams. The shouts of teamsters and resounding whacks filled the air; and as to profanity—well, you could see the air about an enraged teamster turn blue as he exhorted his impenitent mules. And the rain! how it did come down! As I recall it, the spring of 1862 did not measure its rainfall in Western Tennessee by inches, but by feet.

But in time our camp was fairly established. Sibley tents were distributed, one for fourteen men. They protected us from the rain, but they had their drawbacks. Several of us were schoolmates from a Western college, and, of course, in some respects, constituted a little aristocracy. We had had a small tent to ourselves, and the socialistic grayback, as yet, had not crawled therein. Now, we were required to share our tent with others, and that might mean a great many. But when it came to a question of sleeping out in the cold rain, or camping down in a crowded tent in true democratic equality and taking the chances of immigration from our neighbors' clothing, we did not prefer the rain.

Of course, the private soldier has not much opportunity for exploration about his camp, however strong may be his passion in that direction. I did what I could, but my knowledge of the general encampment was much enlarged when, during the days following the battle, all discipline being



relaxed, I tramped the field over in every direction and talked with the men of numerous regiments on their camp grounds. Further on, I shall refer to the position occupied by our army more at length, and shall only refer now to the general position of our encampment, as on a wooded plateau, accessible to attack only from the direction of Corinth, the river being in our rear, Snake Creek and Owl Creek on our right flank, and Lick Creek on our left. In places there were small fields with their adjuncts of deserted cabins. Our troops were camped wherever there was an opening in the woods or underbrush sufficiently large for a regiment. There seemed to be no order or system about the method of encampment, but each regiment occupied such suitable ground as presented itself in the neighborhood of the rest of the brigade; and the same was true of the brigades composing the divisions.

Our regiment was brigaded with the Twenty-eighth, Thirty-second, and Forty-first Illinois. The division was commanded by Brigadier-General Stephen A. Hurlbut (since somewhat noted as United States Minister to Peru). We had served under him in Missouri, and our principal recollection of him was an event which occurred at Macon. We had got aboard a train of cattle cars for the purpose of going to the relief of some point threatened by the enemy. After waiting on the train two or three hours, expecting every moment to start, we noticed a couple of staff officers supporting on each side the commanding general, and leading him to the car I was in. Getting him to the side of the car, they boosted him in at the door, procured a soldier's knapsack for him to sit on, and left him. He was so drunk he couldn't sit upright. The consequence was that the regimental officers refused to move. A court-martial followed, and we heard no more of our general until we found him at Pittsburg Landing in command of a division. He showed so much coolness and bravery in the battle which followed, that we forgave him his first scandalous appearance. But the distrust of him before the battle can readily be imagined.

No one who has not been through the experience can realize the anxiety of the private soldier respecting the character and capacity of his commanding officer. His life is in the general's hand. Whether he shall be uselessly sacrificed, may depend wholly upon the coolness or readiness for an emergency of the



commander ; whether he has had two drinks or three ; whether he has had a good night's rest, or a good cigar. The private soldier regards a new and unknown commander very much as a slave does a new owner, and with good reason. Without confidence on the part of the rank and file, victory is impossible. Their soldiers' confidence in Stonewall Jackson and Lee doubled the effective strength of their armies. When in the Franco-Prussian war a German regiment was called upon for a charge, each man felt that the order was given because it was necessary, and that what he was doing was part of a comprehensive scheme, whose success might very likely depend upon whether he did his assigned part manfully. The French soldier in that war had no such feeling and, of course, the result of that campaign was not long in doubt. In Napoleon's time, the confidence of the rank and file was such that time and again he was saved from defeat by the feeling of the attacked corps or detachment that it *must* hold its ground, or probably imperil the army. Oh, the sickening doubt and distrust of our generals during the first years of the war ! Our soldiers were as brave as ever trod the earth, and thoroughly imbued with the cause for which they were fighting ; but the suspicion that at headquarters there might be inefficiency or drunkenness ; that marches and counter-marches had no definite purpose ; that their lives might be uselessly thrown away—you would have to go through it to realize it ! At the beginning of the war, the Southerners had a vast advantage over us in that respect. Generally speaking, they started out with the same able commanders they had at the end.

Our colonel was thoroughly disliked and distrusted. As he was the ranking colonel of the brigade, he was placed in command of it ; so you see we did not feel particularly happy over the situation, especially as we knew the Confederate army was only twenty-two miles off.

The steady, cold rains of the first week or two was most depressing. On account, probably, of the bad weather and exposure, the soldiers' worst enemy, diarrhoea, took possession of our camps, and for a week or ten days we literally had no stomachs for fighting. But after a little the rain let up, the sun came out warm, our spirits revived, the roads, and conse-

quently the supplies improved ; and on the whole, we thought it rather jolly.

If you had been there of a warm, sunny day you would have noticed every log and stump serving as a seat for a soldier, who had taken off his shirt and was diligently hunting it all over. It was not safe to ask him what he was looking for.

Troops were continually arriving, some of them freshly recruited, and not yet familiar with their arms, or the simplest elements of regimental maneuvers. It was said there were some regiments who had just received their guns, and had never fired them. Badeau says they came on the field without cartridges. I know that improved rifles were scarce, for my own regiment at that time did not have rifles, but old smooth bore muskets with buck-and-ball ammunition—that is, the cartridge had next to the powder a large ball, and then next to it three buck shot. Of course, we should have had no show against rifles at long range, but at short range, in woods and brush, these weapons were fearfully destructive, as we shall presently see.

Strange to say, these freshly recruited regiments were assigned to Sherman's division and to Prentiss' division, whose camps were scattered in the woods farthest out towards Corinth. As might have been expected, these new soldiers did not stand on the order of their going, when they suddenly discovered a hostile army on top of them.

A map of the place selected for the concentration of our army shows that with proper precautions and such defensive works as, later in the war, would have been constructed within a few hours, the place was impregnable. The river which ran in the rear was controlled by our gunboats, and furnished us the means of obtaining abundant supplies. Creeks with marshy banks protected either flank. The only possible avenue of attack upon this position was directly in front, and across that ran little creeks and ravines, with here and there open fields affording fine vantage-ground. A general anticipating the possibility of attack, would not have scattered his divisions so widely, and would have marked a line of defense upon which the troops should rally. Advantage would have been taken of the ground, and trees felled with the tops outwards, through which an attacking force would have, with great difficulty, to struggle. And later in the war,

as a matter of precaution, and because of the proximity of the enemy, breastworks would have been thrown up. All this could have been done in a few hours. Our flanks were so well protected that no troops were needed there, and in case of attack, each division commander should have had his place in the front, to which to immediately march his command; while, the line being not more than three miles long at the very outside estimate, there were abundant forces to man it thoroughly, leaving a large force in the reserve to reinforce a point imperiled.

Why was not this done? It is hard to find an answer. General Sherman's division was at the extreme front. It was being organized. The enemy was not more than twenty-two miles away, and was known to be concentrating from all the West. Yet this general, who afterwards acquired such fame as a consummate master of the art of war, took no precautions whatever, not even thoroughly scouting the ground in his front. His pickets could not have been out more than a mile. General Prentiss' division was also in process of organization, and he, like Sherman, was in advance, and on Sherman's left. The complete absence of the ordinary precautions, always taken by military commanders since the beginning of history, is inexplicable. The only reason I can conjecture for it grows out of the character of General Grant and his distinguished subordinate, and their inexperience. They had had then little practical knowledge of actual warfare. General Sherman, except on one occasion, had never heard a hostile gun fired. They had to learn their art, and the country and their army had to pay the cost of their teaching. Happily, they were able to profit by every lesson, and soon had no equals among our commanders. But because they have since deserved so well of their country, is no reason why history should be silent as to their mistakes. The Confederates would have made a great mistake in attacking us at all in such a position, if we had been prepared to receive them. But this want of preparation prevented us from taking advantage of the opportunity, and inflicting a crushing defeat upon the South. By it the war was prolonged, and every village and hamlet in the West had its house of mourning.

Immediately in the right rear of General Sherman was camped the veteran division of General McClernand. About



two miles further back, and about a mile from the river, was stationed the reserve, consisting of two divisions, Hurlbut's and W. H. L. Wallace's, formerly C. F. Smith's. Across Owl Creek, and seven or eight miles off, was camped General Lew Wallace's division. It was so far away as not to be in easy supporting distance.

On April 1st, our division was marched to an open field, and there carefully reviewed by General Grant. This was our first sight of the victor of Donelson. Friday, the 4th of April, was a sloppy day, and just before sundown we heard firing off towards Sherman's division. We fell into line and started toward the front. After we had marched about a mile, pitch darkness came on. Presently, a staff officer directed a countermarch back to camp, saying it was only a rebel reconnoissance. It was a nasty march back in the mud, dense woods, and thick darkness.

All this day the Confederate army was struggling through the woods and mud, on its march from Corinth to attack us. It was the expectation of General Johnston and his subordinates to cover the intervening space between the two armies in this one day and attack early Saturday morning; but the difficulties of the march was such, that he did not make more than half the distance, and had to go into camp for the night. Saturday was a reasonably pleasant day, but General Johnston's troops had got so entangled in the forests, he did not feel justified in attacking until all his preparations were made, which took the whole of Saturday. He then moved up to within a mile or two of Sherman and Prentiss, and went into camp *within sound of our drums*.

The delay had been so great that Beauregard now advised a countermarch back to Corinth. He represented that our forces had surely been appraised of their march, and it would be too late now to effect a surprise; that they would undoubtedly find us all prepared, and probably behind breastworks and other obstructions. General Johnston was smarting under the criticisms of the campaign which resulted in the loss of Donelson. His courage and military instinct told him that now was the time to strike. He felt, too, that a bold stroke was necessary to redeem the fortunes of the Confederacy and his own reputation. His resolution was to conquer or die;



and he replied to Beauregard: "We shall attack at daylight to-morrow."

Here was an army of a little over 40,000 men, as brave as ever shouldered muskets, fighting on their own soil, and, as they believed, for homes and liberty, resting for the night at about two miles from the invading army, and all prepared to attack at dawn, and sweep the invaders of their country back into the Tennessee river. Upon the favoring breeze, the sound of our drums at evening parade came floating to their ears. They heard the bugle note enjoying quiet and repose in the camp of their unsuspecting foe. They, themselves, were crouching in the thick woods and darkness, all prepared to spring on their prey. No camp-fire was lighted; no unnecessary sound was permitted; but silent, watchful, with mind and heart prepared for conflict, the Southern hosts waited for the morning.

Such was the situation, so far as our enemies were concerned. But how was it with the army fighting for the integrity and preservation of the nation? Let us begin with the commanding General. That day (Saturday) he dispatched General Halleck as follows: "The main force of the army is at Corinth. \* \* \* The number at Corinth and within supporting distance of it cannot be far from 80,000 men." Later in the day he dispatched the news of the enemy's reconnoissance the night before, and added: "I have scarcely the faintest idea of an attack (general one) being made upon us, but will be prepared should a thing take place."

Grant had less than 50,000 men fit for battle. He thinks the enemy at Corinth, twenty-two miles away, has 80,000 men. He must know that the enemy knows Buell, with his army, will soon reach the Tennessee, and when united with his own will nearly double his effective strength; that now, and before Buell joins him, if ever, must the Confederates strike an effective blow. His pickets have been driven in the night before, the enemy using a piece or two of artillery; yet he does not expect an attack, and makes not the slightest preparation to receive or repel one. He leaves General Lew Wallace with over 7,000 good troops at Crump's Landing, out of easy supporting distance. Nelson's division and Crittenden's division of Buell's army at Savannah; and has no thought of moving them up that day to repel an overwhelming attack about to be made on him. On Saturday he visits his army and

Sherman, and then goes back to Savannah, unsuspecting of the presence of the enemy.

How was it with General Sherman, who had the advance on the right, and was probably more relied upon by Grant and Halleck than was Prentiss? In fact it is not at all improbable that Grant wholly relied upon the two division commanders at the front, particularly Sherman, to keep him posted as to the movements of the hostile army. General Sherman reported on Saturday that he thought there were about two regiments of infantry and a battery of artillery about six miles out. As a matter of fact, the whole rebel army was not more than six miles out. Later in the day he dispatches: "The enemy is saucy, but got the worst of it yesterday, and will not press our pickets far. I do not apprehend anything like an attack on our position."

A tolerably extensive reading of campaigns and military histories justifies me in saying that such an exhibition of unsuspecting security in the presence of a hostile army is without a parallel in the history of warfare.

How was it with our army? We knew the enemy to be at Corinth, but there had been no intimation of advance; and no army could get over the intervening space in less than two days, of which, of course, it was the duty of our generals to have ample notice. Usually, before a battle, there seems to be something in the very air that warns the soldier and officer of what is coming, and to nerve themselves for the struggle; but most of us retired this Saturday night to our blankets in as perfect fancied security as ever enveloped an army.

But this was not true of all. A sense of uneasiness pervaded a portion of the advance line. Possibly there had been too much noise in the woods in front, possibly that occult sense, which tells us of the proximity of another, warned them of the near approach of a hostile army. Some of the officers noticed that the woods beyond the pickets seemed to be full of Rebel cavalry. General Prentiss was infected with this uneasiness, and at daylight on Sunday morning sent out the Twenty-first Missouri to make an observation towards Corinth.

This regiment, proceeding through the forest, ran plump upon the Confederate skirmish line, which it promptly attacked. Immediately the Missourians saw an army behind the skirmish line advancing upon them. They could hold their ground but

for a moment. The enemy's advance swept them back, and, like an avalanche, the Confederate army poured into the camps of Sherman's and Prentiss' divisions.

At the first fire our men sprang to arms. By the time the enemy had reached our camps many regiments had become partially formed, but they were all unnerved by the shock. Some were captured by the enemy before they could get their clothes on. Some, without firing a shot, broke for the river-landing, three miles away, and cowered beneath its banks. General Sherman and his staff mounted their horses, and as they galloped past the Fifty-third Ohio, which was getting into line, one of the officers called out to him not to go any farther, for the rebel army was just beyond the rising ground. The general made use of some expression about not getting frightened at a reconnoissance, and went ahead. As he reached the slight elevation he beheld the Confederate army sweeping down upon him. Their skirmish line fired at him, killing his orderly. He realized at last that he was in the presence of a hostile army. From that moment he did everything that mortal man could do to retrieve his fatal mistake. Wounded twice, several horses successively killed under him, chaos and defeat all around, yet his clear intelligence and steady courage stamped him a born leader of men. The other generals and officers yielded to his superior force and obeyed his orders. He was everywhere, encouraging, threatening, organizing, and succeeded in establishing a tolerable line in the rear of his camps.

General Prentiss' troops were more demoralized than Sherman's. Whole regiments broke away, and were not reorganized until after the battle. A tide of fugitives set in toward the landing, carrying demoralization and terror with them.

Our camp was so far back that we heard nothing of this early uproar. The morning was a beautiful one, and after our early breakfast I started down the little creek, hunting for some first flowers of spring. I had scarcely got out of sight of camp, when the firing toward the front, though faintly heard, seemed too steady to be caused by the pernicious habit which prevailed of the pickets firing off their guns on returning from duty, preparatory to cleaning them. A sense of apprehension took possession of me. Presently artillery was heard, and then I turned toward camp, getting more alarmed



at every step. When I reached camp a startled look was on every countenance. The musketry firing had become loud and general, and whole batteries of artillery were joining in the dreadful chorus. The men rushed to their tents and seized their guns, but as yet no order to fall in was given. Nearer and nearer sounded the din of a tremendous conflict. Presently the long roll was heard from the regiments on our right. A staff officer came galloping up, spoke a word to the Major in command the order to fall in was shouted, the drummers began to beat the long roll, and it was taken up by the regiments on our left. The men, with pale faces, wild eyes, compressed lips, quickly accoutered themselves for battle. The shouts of the officers, the rolling of the drums, the hurrying to and fro of the men, the uproar of approaching but unexpected battle, all together produced sensations which cannot be described. Soon, teams with shouting drivers came tearing along the road toward the landing. Crowds of fugitives and men slightly wounded went hurrying past in the same direction. Uproar and turmoil were all around; but we, having got into line, stood quietly with scarcely a word spoken. Each man was struggling with himself and nerving himself for what bid fair to be a dreadful conflict. What thoughts of home and kindred and all that makes life dear come to one at such a moment.

Presently a staff officer rode up, the command to march was given, and with the movement came some relief to the mental and moral strain. As we passed in front of the Forty-first Illinois, a field officer of that regiment, in a clear, ringing voice, was speaking to his men, and announced that if any man left the ranks on pretense of caring for the wounded he should be shot on the spot; that the wounded must be left till the fight was over. His men cheered him, and we took up the cheer. Blood was beginning to flow through our veins again, and we could even comment to one another upon the sneaks who remained in camp, on pretense of being sick. As we moved toward the front the fugitives and the wounded increased in numbers. Poor wretches, horribly mutilated, would drop down, unable to go farther. Wagons full of wounded, filling the air with their groans, went hurrying by. As we approached the scene of conflict, we moved off to the left of the line of the rear-ward going crowd, crossed a small field and halted in the open woods beyond. As we halted, we



saw right in front of us, but about three hundred or four hundred yards off, a dense line of Confederate infantry, quietly standing in ranks. In our excitement, and without a word of command, we turned loose and with our smooth bore muskets opened fire upon them. After three or four rounds, the absurdity of firing at the enemy at that distance with our guns dawned upon us, and we stopped. As the smoke cleared up we saw the enemy still there, not having budged or fired a shot in return. But though our action was absurd, it was a relief to us to do something, and we were rapidly becoming toned up to the point of steady endurance.

As we gazed at the enemy so coolly standing there, an Ohio battery of artillery came galloping up in our rear, and what followed I don't believe was equalled by anything of the kind during the war. As the artillery came up we moved off by the right flank a few steps, to let it come in between us and the Illinois regiment next on our left. Where we were standing was in open, low-limbed oak timber. The line of Southern infantry was in tolerably plain view through the openings in the woods, and were still standing quietly. Of course, we all turned our heads away from them to look at the finely equipped battery, as it came galloping from the rear to our left flank, its officers shouting directions to the riders where to stop their guns. It was the work of but an instant to bring every gun into position. Like a flash the gunners leaped from their seats and unlimbered the cannon. The fine six-horse teams began turning round with the caissons, charges were being rammed home, and the guns pointed toward the dense ranks of the enemy, when, from right in front, a dense puff of smoke, a tearing of shot and shell through the trees, a roar from half a dozen cannon, hitherto unseen, and our brave battery was knocked into smithereens. Great limbs of trees, torn off by cannon shot, came down on horse and rider, crushing them to earth. Shot and shell struck cannon, upsetting them; caissons exploded ~~by~~ them. Not a shot was fired from our side.

But how those astounded artillery men—those of them who could run at all—did scamper out of there. Like Mark Twain's dog, they may be running yet. At least, it is certain that no attempt was ever made to reorganize that battery—it was literally wiped out then and there.

This made us feel mightily uncomfortable—in fact, we had

been feeling quite uncomfortable all the morning. It did not particularly add to the cheerfulness of the prospect, to reflect that our division was the reserve of the army, and should not be called into action, ordinarily, until towards the close of the battle; while here we were, early in the forenoon, face to face with the enemy, our battery of artillery gobbled up at one mouthful, and the rest of the army in great strait, certainly, and probably demoralized.

One of the cannon shot had gone through our Colonel's horse, and the rider had been carried off the field. Colonel Pugh, of the Forty-first Illinois, then took command of the brigade, about-faced us, and marched us back across the little field, and halted us just behind the fence, the enemy during this maneuver leaving us wholly undisturbed.

The rails were thrown down and we lay flat upon the ground, while another battery came up and opened on the enemy, who had moved up almost to the wreck of our first battery.

Here, then, began a fierce artillery duel. Shot and shell went over us and crashing through the trees to the rear of us, and I suppose that shot and shell went crashing through the trees above the enemy; but if they didn't suffer any more from shot and shell than we did, there was a great waste of powder and iron that day. But how a fellow does hug the ground under such circumstances! As a shell goes whistling over him he flattens out, and presses himself into the earth, almost. Pity the sorrows of a big fat man under such a fire.

Later in the war we should have dug holes for ourselves with bayonets. We must have lain there hugging the ground for more than two hours, with now and then an intermission, listening to the flight of dreaded missiles above us; but, as nobody in our immediate neighborhood was hurt, we at length voted the performance of the artillery to be, on the whole, rather fine. During intermissions, while the scenes were shifting, as it were, we began to feel a disposition to talk and joke over the situation.

The reason why we were not subjected to an infantry fire, was because the enemy's forces, tangled in the wooded country, and in places beaten back by the stubborn gallantry of our surprised but not demoralized men, needed to be reorganized. All the Southern accounts agree that their brigades and divisions had become mixed in apparently hopeless confusion.

The battlefield was so extensive that fighting was going on at some point all the time, so that at no time was there a complete cessation of the roar of artillery or the rattle of musketry.

Two or three times General Hurlbut came riding along our line; and once, during a lull, General Grant and staff came slowly riding by, the General with a cigar in his mouth, and apparently as cool and unconcerned as if inspection was the sole purpose of visiting us. The General's apparent indifference had, undoubtedly, a good influence on the men. They saw him undisturbed, and felt assured that the worst was over, and the attack had spent its force. This must have been soon after he reached the field; for, upon hearing the roar of battle in the morning at Savannah he went aboard a steamer, came up the river eight or nine miles, and did not reach the scene of action much, if any, before 10 o'clock. By that time, Sherman, McClernand and Prentiss had been driven more than a mile beyond their camps, and with such of their command as they could hold together had formed on the flanks of the two reserve divisions of Hurlbut and W. H. L. Wallace, who had moved forward beyond their own camps to meet them.

While General Johnston and his adjutants were reorganizing their command after their first great triumph, to complete the conquest so well begun, Grant and his generals were attempting to organize resistance out of defeat, to establish their lines, to connect the divisions with each other, and improve the situation of the different commands by seizing the most favorable ground. Sherman and McClernand, with what remained of their divisions, were on the extreme right; W. H. L. Wallace, whose division had not yet come into action, on their left, and on the left center of our army; Prentiss on his left. Then came Hurlbut; then a small force under Stuart, on the extreme left of our line.

Fortunately for us, General Johnston's plan was to attack our left. If, when he was ready to renew the battle, he had assailed our right, where were Sherman's and McClernand's divisions, who had already done almost as much as flesh and blood could stand, nothing would have stopped him, and by two o'clock we should have been where we were at dark—that is, huddled about the landing. Then there would have been



nothing to do but to surrender. Happily, most happily, when he renewed the assaults upon our lines, it was upon those portions manned by reserve divisions, troops that had not been seriously engaged, and had had time to steady their nerves, and to select favorable positions.

As for myself and comrades, we had become accustomed to the situation somewhat. The lull in the fighting in our immediate vicinity, and the reports which reached us that matters were now progressing favorably on the rest of the field, reassured us. We were becoming quite easy in mind. I had always made it a rule to keep a supply of sugar and some hard tack in my haversack, ready for an emergency. It stood me in good stead just then, for I alone had something besides fighting for lunch. I nibbled my hard tack, and ate my sugar with comfort and satisfaction, for I don't believe three men of our regiment were hurt by this artillery fire upon us, which had been kept up with more or less fury for two or three hours.

One of the little episodes of the battle happened about this time. We noticed that a Confederate, seated on one of the abandoned cannon I have mentioned, was leisurely taking an observation. He was out of range of our guns, but our First Lieutenant got a rifle from a man who happened to have one, took deliberate aim, and Johnny Reb tumbled.

But soon after noon the confederate forces were ready to hurl themselves on our lines. There had been more or less fighting on our right all the time, but now Johnson had collected his troops and massed them in front of the Union army's left. Language is inadequate to give an idea of the situation. Cannon and musketry roared and rattled, not in volleys, but in one continual din. Charge after charge was made upon the Union lines, and every time repulsed. By concentrating the main body of his troops on our left, General Johnson was superior there to us in numbers, and there was no one upon whom we could call for help. General Lew Wallace had not taken the precaution to learn the roads between his division at Crump's Landing and the main body, and he and his 7,000 men were lost in the woods, instead of being where they could support us in this our dire extremity. The left wing of our brigade was the Hornet's Nest, mentioned in the Southern accounts of the battle. On the immediate right of my regiment was timber with growth of underbrush, and the



dreadful conflict set the woods on fire, burning the dead and the wounded who could not crawl away. At one point not burned over, I noticed, after the battle, a strip of low underbrush which had evidently been the scene of a most desperate contest. Large patches of brush had been cut off by bullets at about as high as a man's waist, as if mowed with a scythe, and I could not find in the whole thicket a bush which had not at some part of it been touched by a ball. Of course, human beings could not exist in such a scene, save by closely hugging the ground, or screening themselves behind trees.

Hour after hour passed. Time and again the Confederate hordes threw themselves on our lines, and were repulsed; but our ranks were becoming dangerously thinned. If a few thousand troops could have been brought from Lew Wallace's division to our sorely-tried left the battle would have been won. His failure to reach us was fatal.

Yet, during all this terrible ordeal through which our comrades on the immediate right and the left of us were passing, we were left undisturbed until about two o'clock. Then there came from the woods on the other side of the field, to the edge of it, and then came trotting across it, as fine looking a body of men as I ever expect to see under arms. They came with their guns at what soldiers call right shoulder shift. Lying on the ground there, with the rails of the fence thrown down in front of us, we beheld them, as they started in beautiful line; then increasing their speed as they neared our side of the field, they came on till they reached the range of our smooth bore guns, loaded with buck and ball. Then we rose with a volley right in their faces. Of course, the smoke then entirely obscured the vision, but with eager, bloodthirsty energy, we loaded and fired our muskets at the top of our speed, aiming low, until, from not noticing any return fire, the word passed along from man to man to stop firing. As the smoke rose so that we could see over the field, that splendid body of men presented to my eyes more the appearance of a wind-row of hay than anything else. They seemed to be piled up on each other in a long row across the field. Probably the obscurity caused by the smoke, as well as the slight slope of the ground towards us, accounted for this piled up appearance, for it was something which could not possibly occur. But the slaughter had been fearful. Here and there you could see a squad of men runnign

off out of range ; now and then a man lying down, probably wounded or stunned, would rise and try to run, soon to tumble from the shots we sent after him. After the action I went all over the field of battle, visiting every part of it ; but in no place was there anything like the number of dead upon the same space of ground as here in this little field. Our old fashioned guns, loaded as they were, and at such close quarters, had done fearful execution. This is undoubtedly the same field General Grant speaks of in the Century article, but he is mistaken when he speaks of the dead being from both sides. There were no Union dead in that field.

Our casualties were small. In our little set of college boys only one, was hurt ; he receiving a wound in the leg, which caused its amputation. The bayonet of my gun was shot off, but possibly that was done by some man behind me, firing just as I threw the muzzle of my gun into his way. I didn't notice it until, in loading my gun, I struck my hand against the jagged end of the broken piece.

The Confederates had all they wanted of charging across the field, and let us alone. But just to our left General Johnston had personally organized and started a heavy assaulting column. Overwhelmed by numbers, the Forty-first and Thirty-second Illinois gave way from the position they had so tenaciously held, but one of their last shots mortally wounded the Confederate general. The gallant Lieutenant-Colonel of the Forty-first, whom we had cheered as we moved out in the morning, was killed, and his regiment, broken and cut to pieces, did not renew the fight. Making that break in our line, after four or five hours of as hard fighting as ever occurred on this continent, was the turning point of the day. American had met American in fair, stand-up fight, and our side was beaten, because we could not reinforce the point which was assailed by the concentrated forces of the enemy.

Of course, the giving way on our left necessitated our abandoning the side of the field from whence we had annihilated an assaulting column. We moved back a short distance in the woods, and a crowd of our enemies promptly occupied the position we had left. Then began the first real, prolonged fighting experienced by our regiment that day. Our success in crushing the first attack had exhilarated us. We had tasted blood and were thoroughly aroused. Screening ourselves

behind every log and tree, all broken into squads, the enemy broken up likewise, we gave back shot for shot and yell for yell. The very madness of bloodthirstiness possessed us. To kill, to exterminate the beings in front of us was our whole desire. Such energy and force was too much for our enemies, and ere long we saw squads of them rising from the ground and running away. Again there was no foe in our front. Ammunition was getting short, but happily a wagon came up with cartridges, and we took advantage of the lull to fill our boxes. We had not yet lost many men and were full of fight.

This contest exploded all my notions derived from histories and pictures, of the way men stand up in the presence of the enemy. Unless in making an assault or moving forward, both sides hugged the ground as closely as they possibly could and still handle their guns. I doubt if a human being could have existed three minutes, if standing erect in open ground under such a fire as we here experienced. As for myself, at the beginning I jumped behind a little sapling not more than six inches in diameter, and instantly about six men ranged themselves behind me, one behind the other. I thought they would certainly shoot my ears off, and I would be in luck if the side of my head didn't go. The reports of their guns were deafening. A savage remonstrance was unheeded. I was behind a sapling and proposed to stay there. They were behind me and proposed to stay there.

The sapling did me a good turn, small as it was. It caught some Rebel bullets, as I ascertained for a certainty afterwards. I fancied at the time that I heard the spat of the bullets as they struck.

Here my particular chum was wounded by a spent ball, and crawled off the field. I can see him yet, writhing at my feet, grasping the leaves and sticks in the horrible pain which the blow from a spent ball inflicts. A bullet struck the top of the forehead of the wit of the company, plowing along the skull without breaking it. His dazed expression, as he turned instinctively to crawl to the rear, was so comical as to cause a laugh even there.

The lull caused by the death of General Johnston did not last long, and again on our left flank great masses of the enemy appeared, and we had to fall back two or three hundred yards.

Then began another fight. But this time the odds were



overwhelmingly against us. At it we went, but in front and quartering on the left thick masses of the enemy slowly but steadily advanced upon us. This time it was a log I got behind, kneeling, loading and firing into the dense ranks of the enemy advancing right in front, eager to kill, kill! I lost thought of companions, until a ball struck me fair in the side, just under the arm, knocking me over. I felt it go clear through my body, struggled on the ground with the effect of the blow for an instant, recovered myself, sprang to my feet, saw I was alone, my comrades already on the run, the enemy close in on the left as well as front—saw it all at a glance, felt I was mortally wounded, and—took to my heels. Run! such time was never made before; overhauled my companions in no time; passed them; began to wonder that a man shot through the body could run so fast, and to suspect that perhaps I was not mortally wounded after all; felt for the hole the ball had made, found it in the blouse and shirt, bad bruise on the ribs, nothing more—spent ball; never relaxed my speed; saw everything around—see it yet. I see the enemy close in on the flank, pouring in their fire at short range. I see our men running for their lives, men every instant tumbling forward limp on their faces, men falling wounded and rolling on the ground, the falling bullets raising little puffs of dust on apparently every foot of ground, a bullet through my hair, a bullet through my trousers. I hear the cruel *iz, iz*, of the minie balls everywhere. Ahead I see artillery galloping for the landing, and crowds of men running with almost equal speed, and all in the same direction. I even see the purple tinge given by the setting sun to the dust and smoke of battle. I see unutterable defeat, the success of the rebellion, a great catastrophe, a moral and physical cataclysm.

No doubt, in less time than it takes to recall these impressions, we ran out of this horrible gauntlet—a party who shall be nameless still in the lead of the regiment.

Before getting out of it we crossed our camp ground, and here one of our college set, the captain of the company fell, with several holes through his body, while two others of our set were wounded. In that short race at least one-third of our little command were stricken down.

Immediately behind us the Confederates closed in, and the brave General Prentiss and the gallant remains of his command

were cut off and surrendered. As we passed out of range of the enemy's fire we mingled with the masses of troops skurrying towards the landing, all semblance of organization lost. It was a great crowd of beaten troops. Pell-mell we rushed towards the landing. As we approached it we saw a row of siege guns, manned and ready for action, while a dense mass of unorganized infantry were rallied to their support. No doubt they were men from every regiment on the field, rallied by brave officers for the last and final stand.

We passed them—or, at least, I did. As I reached the top of the bluff I saw, marching up, in well dressed lines, the advance of General Nelson's division of Buell's army, then being ferried across the river. They moved up the bluff and took part in repulsing the last, rather feeble assault made at dark by a small portion of the enemy, though the main defense was made by brave men collected from every quarter of the field, determined to fight to the last.

As for myself, I was alone in the crowd. My regiment was thoroughly scattered. I was considerably hurt and demoralized, and didn't take a hand in the last repulse of the enemy. Darkness came on, and then, for the first time since morning, the horrid din of fire-arms ceased. An examination showed that the ball, though it had hit me fair on the rib, was so far spent that it only made a bad bruise and respiration painful. A requisition on the sugar and hard tack followed, and then, as I happened to be near an old house filled with wounded, most of the night was spent in carrying them water.

Every fifteen minutes the horizon was lighted up by the flash of a great gun from one of our gunboats, as it sent a shell over towards the Confederate bivouacs in the woods. General Lew Wallace's division at last reached the battle field, and was placed by General Grant on the right, preparatory to renewing the fight in the morning. All night long the fresh divisions of Buell's army were being ferried across the river, and placed in position. A light rain came on, putting out the fires kindled by the battle.

The next morning the contest was begun by Wallace's division of Buell's army. The remnants of Grant's army that had any fight left in them, slowly collected together on the right.

My own regiment, when I found its colors, had as many men

together, probably, as any in Hurlbut's division, but there could not have been more than one hundred and fifty. It was the same, I suspect, with every regiment that had been hotly engaged. The men were thoroughly scattered. Soldiers of pluck joined us who could not find their own command, and no doubt some of ours joined other regiments.

When our general was again about to lead our division to the front, I was only too glad to avail myself of permission to join a body of men to support a battery in reserve. Badly bruised, sore and worn out, I sat or lay on the ground near the guns, while Monday's battle progressed, the sound of it getting farther and farther away. About two o'clock we saw the cavalry moving to the front, and knew the enemy had retreated.

That night, as we collected on our old camp ground, what eager inquiries were made! With what welcome did we greet each new arrival; how excitedly the events of the last two days were discussed! We found that from the fourteen in our tent, one was killed, one mortally wounded, and seven others more or less severely wounded, only five escaping unhurt. This proportion, of course, was very unusual. The regiment itself, which had not lost many in the first two fights we made, was still, on account of the disastrous retreat under a flank fire, one of the heaviest losers, in proportion to the numbers engaged, in the whole army.

The feeling in the army after the battle was very bitter. All felt that even a few hours' notice of the impending attack, spent in preparation to receive it, would have been ample to have enabled us to give the Confederates such a reception as Beauregard feared and expected, and to have defeated them. It was long before General Grant regained the confidence of the army and country that he lost that day. He and Sherman here learned a lesson that they never forgot, but they learned it at fearful cost to the country and to us.

It has been many times claimed that Buell's opportune arrival Sunday night saved Grant and his army from annihilation on Monday. This is probably correct. Still, it is possible, that without this aid, the arrival on the ground of Lew Wallace's fresh and strong division, to aid the thousands of brave men determined to fight to the last, would have



resulted in the repulse of an enemy which had suffered so severely on Sunday.

But I have long been inclined to agree with those Southerners, who contend, that if the gallant Johnston had not been killed so early in the afternoon, our defeat would have been accomplished long enough before dark, to have rendered our reinforcements useless.

One word more, as to the numbers of the armies engaged on Sunday. A careful comparison of the returns will show that at the beginning the two armies were about equally matched in numbers; but by the time our stampeded men had got out of the way, and the two reserve divisions were in line with the remnants of the three other divisions, the preponderance was largely with the Confederates. They could choose their own point of attack, and we had no reserve with which to strengthen a shattered line.

The literature of the battle is quite extensive. The Count of Paris gives in his history the best preliminary description; but as a whole, and making reasonable allowances, the best account yet written is contained in the life of Albert Sidney Johnston, by his son. The account by General Force, contained in the Scribner series of "Campaigns of the Civil War," is good.

But no study of the battle can be complete without the aid of General Buell's articles in the Century Magazine, and the maps of the field, which he has so carefully prepared.

What were the results of this first great battle of the war? Its influence upon the gigantic contest which was to be waged for three years longer was probably not great. It was too near a drawn battle. But if it was necessary to demonstrate to the world and to ourselves the courage of our people, that generations of peace and peaceful pursuits had not one whit lessened the force or the enthusiasm of the race that peopled this Western Continent, then here was demonstration the most positive.

The people of the South for the first time realized the nature of the conflict they had provoked. Until this campaign, the great mass of the Southerners could not be made to believe that the students and farmers and mechanics and merchants of the North loved their country and its institutions more than

they loved the gains of peace; nay, more than they loved their lives. They saw here an army of young men representing their kindred of the North, fighting, not for their own homes and firesides, but for the perpetuity of the Nation, with a courage and pertinacity which showed that this generation was resolved to transmit what it had received from the fathers of the country. They saw this army attacked at every disadvantage, rally at the call of a chief worthy of it, and who was a type of its character and its lofty motives, and then bravely endure a storm unparalleled on this continent.

The thousands of youthful dead left on that bloody battlefield demonstrated that we have a country and a race worthy to take the lead in the march of human advancement.

WARREN OLNEY.





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